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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 10, 2004

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Brown's bill to better manage State Fair goes to governor

Legislation also ensures payment of premium awards to state youth

LANSING – Legislation sponsored by state Sen. Cameron S. Brown, R-Fawn River Township, to create an autonomous authority under the supervision of the Department of Management and Budget (DMB) for better fiscal management of the Michigan Fair passed both House and Senate chambers Thursday. The bill now moves to the desk of Governor Jennifer Granholm for signing.

Senate Bill 1130 would remove the State Fair from the oversight responsibility of the Department of Agriculture to DMB.

“Agriculture is Michigan’s second largest industry, and yet it has one of the state’s smallest budgets,” Brown said. “When the State Fair has overextended itself, the Department of Ag has been required to pick up the tab at the expense of important ag programs.”

The payout has amounted to some \$4 million over ten years. One of the major programs affected has been statewide bovine TB testing.

“Something had to be done to keep the fair from draining limited funds in the ag budget,” Brown said. “By establishing a Fair Authority supervised by the state’s money managers, we can save the Ag budget for ag programs, and at the same time put the fair on a path toward greater financial stability.”

The new State Exposition and Fairgrounds Authority will be required to submit a five year financial plan to the Legislature and governor. Brown’s bill is consistent with the recommendations of the Wood-McInerney report, recently commissioned by the governor to study ways to restructure the State Fair to achieve better financial performance.

Senate Bill 1130 also authorizes payment of outstanding payouts to more than 1,500 Michigan youths for overdue premium awards from this past summer’s State Fair.

“These young people worked hard to earn these awards, and the state must meet its obligation to pay its bills, especially to our youth.”

Overdue payments to contractors and vendors are also authorized in the bill.

(More)

“It is a relief to put this legislation successfully behind us,” Brown said. “It is good public policy for Michigan’s farm community, for the youth of our state, and for the future financial stability of the State Fair. I trust the governor will sign the bill.”

Brown, who lives in the farmhouse built by his great, great grandparents, is the chair of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee in the Michigan Senate.

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